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ABSTRACT

This manual is designed to encourage older people to take an active role in local television program production and to design and produce programs that will enhance the quality of life for other older Americans. It is noted that locally produced television offers older people a voice at the local level, the opportunity for making new friends and learning new tasks, and the means for community involvement. The manual is divided into five major sections: (1) Local Programming: Some Background; (2) Television Production: The Players (the channel staff, the production crew, the talent, the audience, and a case study); (3) Television Production: The Tools (videotape, cameras, players/recorders/editors, the switcher, the film chain, graphics, the set, lighting, audio equipment, the Portapak, and odds and ends); (4) Television Production: The Process (getting started/training, the three Ps, scriptwriting, program formats, legalities, and program promotion); and (5) glossary. A 16-item bibliography is provided as well as brief descriptions of the sponsoring organization, the Institute of Lifetime Learning, and the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers. (DB)

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Community Television

A Handbook for Production

A Publication of the
Institute of Lifetime Learning
Program Department
American Association of Retired Persons
and the
National Federation of Local Cable Programmers

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Foreword

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) is no stranger to the field of television. It has produced the weekly television program, "Modern Maturity," since January 1985. "Modern Maturity" is a professionally produced program aired on more than 240 public television stations. It provides AARP a national forum to present interesting issues to persons over age 50 and provides the opportunity to highlight the many contributions that older people make to our society.

There is another kind of television programming which can have a tremendous impact on the lives of older persons. This type of television is locally produced by amateurs with minimal budgets and aired on cable stations throughout America. It offers older people a voice at the local level which can be heard by the entire community. Granted, these programs are generally not perfectly paced and slick such as the ones we see on our commercial or public television networks, but they are unique because they educate and entertain neighbors who may no longer be able to get out into the community.

This manual is an effort by AARP to encourage older people to take an active role in local television program production and to design programs which will enhance the quality of life for other older Americans. I hope you will find it both inspirational and useful.

Cyril F. Brickfield
Executive Director

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Prologue

It's evening—and in Quincy, Massachusetts, 70-year-old Fran Cosgrove dons a headset and takes her position behind the camera she'll be operating tonight. In Fayetteville, Arkansas, Peter Harkins, age 63, straightens his tie and double checks the speakerphone that will soon give community viewers live access on his TV call-in program. And in San Diego, Wynne Hollinshead, a grandmother, sits down at the control room's switcher from where she'll direct "Neighborhood Watch," a popular local show.

What's unusual here is not just that Cosgrove, Harkins, and Hollinshead are all of retirement age, but that until recently none even dreamed of personally producing television programs. But like thousands of novice producers, young and old, they've discovered a new dimension to the now not-so-new medium of television—community cable access channels where local citizens can receive training and assistance in making their own television programs.

More than 1,000 cable access channels now exist in America, and federal law recognizes cities' rights to require channels for community TV when awarding cable franchises. By making their own programs and experiencing "the other side of the television picture" local organizations and individuals are discovering an exciting, effective way of reaching large numbers of their neighbors. And older persons have been among the most active producers of this new type of TV programming, turning out talk shows and how-to series on gardening, cooking and crafts, as well as award-winning dramas and musical presentations. "I was looking for friends, fun, and a creative outlet for my ideas," says Lorraine Chambers McCarthy of Royal Oak, Michigan, and "I found it all in my art show on cable TV."

Community cable channels offer a unique opportunity to present highly specialized programming to locally targeted audiences. Unlike large TV networks which "broadcast" general programming, community channels and "narrowcast" shows which are very specific and/or local in nature. A city council meeting, a series on stamp collecting, and a studio panel program presenting area health care resources are all examples of narrowcasting. The productions typically aired on these cable channels are not really competing with the flashy fare offered by the major networks. Local cable TV channels are viewed more accurately as valuable new conduits for community communications. Their availability to ordinary citizens has been called an electronic extension of the democratic principle of free expression.

This manual and the accompanying video tape are designed as an introduction to a fascinating opportunity and an invitation to produce for your own cable access television programs. Use these items to complement training materials which may be available at your local access center.

Many aspects of TV production are easier than most people realize, and persons of retirement age often already possess many of the important elements needed for a successful show: community familiarity, organizational skills and writing abilities, a lifetime of assorted talents and interests, available

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time, and the motivation to enjoy working hard for something worthwhile.

So even if you don't know the first thing about cameras, video tape, and monitors, or the difference between a script sheet and a cue card, use this manual as an aid to beginning yet another life adventure.

Like any reference work, this manual may be used in a variety of ways. Perhaps you are already familiar with your community's access television channels, but now you're getting serious about producing your own programming and are curious about the basic equipment. You may want to bypass the first two main areas of consideration and start with Section III, "The Tools," an overview of the basic machines used in TV production. On the other hand, you may have just mastered your microwave oven's operation and now haven't the slightest interest in conquering another modern contraption. In that case you may want to skip "The Tools" and begin instead with items more in line with your passions of script writing and public relations, topics covered in Section IV, "The Process." Consult the glossary in Section V when you encounter an unfamiliar TV term.

Welcome to community television.

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Section I

LOCAL PROGRAMMING: SOME BACKGROUND

Most of the present U.S. population was not born when the neighborhood gathered and marveled at the first flickering box on the block, but older persons tend to remember that day. That shared community experience with television in the early 1950s was short-lived; nearly every house soon had a TV set, and the way we lived was fundamentally changed. Whatever its failings, television now is cited as the primary source of information and recreation for all age groups. Born of American ingenuity, big business sense, and the national entertainment/journalistic industries, television remained very much a one-way communications medium until recently. But in the 1970s technological innovations ranging from satellite transmissions to home video recorders and cameras greatly expanded the television horizon.

During its first two decades three commercial networks and their broadcast affiliates dominated the television picture, and their programming about local people and events was, and still is, minimal. A few major cities also had independent broadcast stations, but they too have ignored local programming largely in favor of old movies, major sporting events, and syndicated shows. Even the noncommercial Public Broadcast System (PBS) has never been very public when it comes to presenting local people and issues on television.

The simple fact is that most broadcast stations really reach beyond their home cities and feel the audience for local programming is usually too small to justify the cost of producing it. One exception is local news shows which broadcasters developed mainly due to government mandates to provide some local programming. To the surprise of the broadcasters themselves, large numbers of people have come to tune in for coverage about their hometowns. But beyond the local news and occasional public affairs programs, opportunities are limited in broadcast television for ordinary people to have much input in TV programming. That's where cable television and community access channels come in.

Cable television first served modest-sized cities located beyond the good reception range of broadcast stations transmitting from larger cities. But cable television's identity today is no longer primarily a community antenna erected for bringing television to small places. For most subscribers now, cable TV is a service purchased for the wide variety of television choice it provides, and by 1986 it was available to 75 percent of American homes. More than 44 percent of those households choose to hook up with

Satellite receive dish used by many cable operators.

it. While other technologies, such as backyard satellite dishes, also provide a broad array of programming, only cable currently offers locally programmed channels as selections on the TV menu.

Locally programmed channels vary greatly in quantity and quality due mainly to the differing levels of support provided by the local cable company as required by the cities who grant the cable franchises. Some large cities may have a dozen or more channels allocated for community use, while others have none. In many places separate channels are set aside for "access" by the cities' schools, government agencies, libraries, and other institutions.

Additionally, some local access cable channels are termed "public," and these generally provide television production training for ordinary citizens as well as opportunities to appear on programs whose content is determined by the participants. Many of these public access channels are operated by the cable company itself, while in other places independent, nonprofit organizations have been established to administer the public access channels. Federal law prohibits the cable company from censoring public access programming. Responsibility for program content lies primarily with the local person(s) who produces the material.

Yet another type of cable channel is termed "local origination" (LO) where the cable company both manages and programs the channel. Unlike access channels, these LO channels typically carry commercial advertising. LO channels have a professional staff which produces programming they perceive to be of community value. They are often receptive to requests and suggestions from local groups.

In many places the access channels may be some combination of the above types of local cable channels. Community television is a term often used to describe such channels.

Find out what kinds of local cable channels are available in your area, and what rights, resources, and training opportunities exist to assist your use of those channels. Preliminary information should be available at your city government's cable TV office and at the local cable company. If you don't have adequate cable access opportunities in your area, you and your neighbors often can work to establish or enhance such an exciting community venture. Successful community television operation and its contribution to civic life often lead to enhanced community pride and enjoyment.

Community television is a term used to describe the different types of cable television channels.

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The National Federation of Local Cable Programmers (NFLCP) is a nonprofit, membership organization which promotes the development of local programming on cable television and provides information about national cable policy issues. Community TV's history is closely intertwined with that of the NFLCP, and the organization publishes a variety of useful materials for community groups and interested individuals. (See Section VI, "Bibliography.") Contact NFLCP as an aid to networking with other locales and for tips on how to get rolling in your own community.

Section II

TELEVISION PRODUCTION: THE PLAYERS

It takes a team to make community television work and the players come from all over town. First there is a local government committed to citizen use of a cable TV system built in its city. Then there must be a cable company which meets or exceeds community TV requirements set forth in the local cable TV franchise agreement. Finally, the most important players of all: channel staff, production volunteers, talent, audience, institutional and business support—in short, the community itself. Understanding opportunities, roles, and responsibilities of some of these players in the developing game of community television is the subject of this section.

II-A. THE CHANNEL STAFF

Community TV is an exciting and ambitious concept. It is also a brand new field that requires a team effort which includes people with a variety of skills: video production knowledge, teaching talents, public relations capabilities, on-camera poise, and the ability to work intimately with the wide spectrum of people who use their community television facilities. For cable access television to succeed, there must be a dedicated professional staff and a pool of energetic community volunteers who understand one another and their common goals.

No two cities or access centers are the same, but in general it can be said that a community access staff works long hours for modest pay. The basic job is to facilitate your use of the access channel—from programming requested announcements to training and assisting you in the video production of your own show. (See Section IV-A, "Getting Started.")

As a citizen you enjoy certain rights in using the channel, but there could be practical guidelines developed to make the best use of limited resources. Every community channel should have copies of policies and procedures you can read. You may have to be a local resident to use a community TV channel (although you cannot be required to be a cable subscriber), or you may be urged to start your production career with a simple studio program rather than embarking on a major documentary.

Community TV channels have a tremendous appetite for programming since they have no national network feeding them shows. Without enough programs, the channel(s) lacks identity and sometimes even viability. A good access staff knows how to help make television shows effectively while

encouraging both program quantity and technical quality.

II-B. THE PRODUCTION CREW

To make a TV show, even a simple one, usually requires a number of crew members. Initially the channel staff may figure prominently on the production crew, but true access television means you and other volunteers are making your own programs. So the staff may be weaned away from you over time, although one member should always be available for consultation, particularly concerning the more technical matters.

Whatever the mix of volunteers and staff, any television production crew has a division of labor with different people responsible for specific tasks. Most of the crew roles involve working with some equipment, although the technical expertise required for many positions is about equal to that necessary to operate a toaster. Even folks who confess to being "all thumbs" can perform many production crew jobs.

The producer is the person ultimately responsible for the program's fate. As the main organizer of the production, the producer has a non-technical role involving coordination of schedules, facilities, and budget concerns. The producer appoints a director and imparts to him or her the program's main objectives and may suggest a specific approach to achieve the show's intent.

The director implements the producer's ideas by making crew assignments and functioning as the supervisor during the actual production. The director may give each crew member a sheet listing his specific duties such as camera angles, audio and video details, and other pertinent data.

Long before the production takes place, the scriptwriter receives the producer's main ideas and develops them step-by-step into a shooting script. A TV scriptwriter must have a good grasp of the television medium and work within its limitations.

The technical director sits at the control room's switcher (see Section II-D) next to the director and selects requested camera shots or other video sources such as a prerecorded tape segment. Out in the studio, the floor director listens on a headset to the director's instructions and relays time cues and other tips to the on-camera talent.

The camera operators in a studio production usually have little latitude in the shots they frame. Rather, they simply follow commands (coming via a headset) given by the technical director. The video tape operator starts the tape rolling when told to and monitors it as it records. The audio technician turns up the proper sound source (a microphone, music from record or tape, etc.) as called for in the script or by the director. Titles and credits may be superimposed on the screen by the character generator operator following instruction from the director.

There may be other roles on a television crew (e.g., lighting director, graphic artist, or video engineer), but in most community TV production the crews are not that large. In fact, often one person performs more than one function during a shoot, and it is not uncommon to find the scriptwriter, producer, director, and technical director of an access show are all the same person.

However many people are involved in the production, teamwork is essential to coordinate the series of events that make up a program. It is exhilarating to be a part of a smooth production, although rarely do things go perfectly, and there is often a need to improvise. It's all part of the fun of community television.

If you lack the time or inclination to learn video production techniques and assume a formal role on a crew, there is still probably a place for you assisting on an access show by answering phones, promoting projects or just being an enthusiastic member of a studio audience.

II-C. TALENT

Whether the harmonica player is on key, or the guest host is a fascinating con-

versationalist or hopeless bore, in television talk they are "talent" simply because they appear "on camera." But truly talented or not, for anyone to look his or her best on television, some fundamental principles should be appreciated.

On the psychological side, self-confidence is the key to success in front of lights and cameras. It is normal to be nervous about appearing on TV. Even some well-known stars get queasy as show time approaches. A wise producer will take steps to ensure that the talent is prepared well beforehand, and not bombarded with advice minutes before taping begins. Talent performs best in a relaxed atmosphere where crew members are attentive and confident of their roles and tasks. The old adage "be yourself" is certainly true for amateur talent to be most effective on TV.

Physically, television success is tied to appreciating some of the illusionary aspects of the video screen. TV tends to exaggerate, and most of us would prefer to do without the five to ten pounds seemingly added to our faces when on camera. But, experimenting with lighting and make up often can make magic, creating appearances even more attractive than those of real life. If you will appear on camera, or are setting up for those who will, be sure to have powder on hand for shiny heads and noses or else "hot spots" on the screen can develop. Likewise, talent should keep jewelry to a minimum since resulting reflections might produce some unscripted special effects.

Other tips for talent include avoiding black or white dress since color video has difficulty dealing with these extremes, and keeping stark contrasting ensembles in the closet. Checked patterns and herringbones should also stay home, for these may make focusing difficult or even appear to vibrate on camera.

Simple pastel clothing looks good for most people on television, and certain other solid shades can be becoming for particular skin tones and hair color. Like so many other aspects of TV production, experimentation is the key word in projecting an appealing on-camera image.

During the show, talent needs to be aware of signals such as time cues given by the floor director, but not appear to be distracted from the essence of the program, which is what viewers see and hear. If it is a simple interview or talk show, talent should look at the person(s) being addressed as one does in ordinary conversation. The technical crew should position chairs and cameras so this can happen naturally. It is often wise to remove any monitors facing the set since amateur talent may be tempted to gaze over and check out how they are doing—a usually obvious move that detracts from the program.

Plan and pace your production. For example, when conducting an interview, if you're determined to ask your studio guest ten different questions during your half-hour show, don't spend ten minutes on the first one. Use gestures often, but take care not to wiggle or nervously play with the microphone cable which may be attached to your clothing.

Do not bring unnecessary notes on the set and do repeat important points and themes throughout the program. Since most TV shows are taped, unless you are told to stop, continue performing even if you make a mistake—it may be edited out before telecast time.

Most of all, have fun. You'll be great!

II-D. THE AUDIENCE

Television shows are made to be watched; without an audience, they really have no point. However, an audience does not include everyone out there in televisionland. An instructional show on ocean sailing techniques is not particularly appealing to committed landlubbers, and preschoolers are not likely to have their eyes glued to a program on income tax tips.

TV shows are targeted to certain demographic groups, and in general, the wider the distribution of the program, the more general must be its nature. Network broadcasters have to develop programs of interest to millions of viewers or they will

not garner the advertising revenues that are their lifeblood. Satellite TV channels which specialize in sports, news, music videos, or the arts may only draw a minor audience share in your area, but multiplied by hundreds of cable systems and thousands of receiving dishes, the audience numbers can become impressive.

Still, a high school homecoming parade in Kokomo, Indiana, would not be of interest much beyond the city limits, so it probably would not show up as a two-hour ABC special report in prime time. But community cable TV can do what the big boys can't—show that homecoming parade, a city council meeting, or a library fair—to an interested audience in the one place people may watch it, your hometown. The audience may not number in the millions, but it can be significant at the local level. Community TV's ability to narrowcast, that is direct programming to a very specific audience, is one of its strongest points.

As a new community TV producer you should have a sense of your audience: Who in the community you are trying to reach and what do you want to communicate to them are among the questions you should ask yourself. There certainly will be a need to promote your program (see Section IV-F), and you might throw in an address or telephone number at the end of your show to encourage feedback.

Don't underestimate your neighbor's ability to overlook some of the less than professional aspects of your production. As people become accustomed to community TV, they recognize that it is not competing with Hollywood for glamour and flash, but that it is uniquely suited to convey solid information from local, credible people.

Your local audience will appreciate what you are doing, and people will watch. Just go to the grocery store after you have been on-camera a few times and see what happens.

Efficiently produced talk shows are typical of Dallas, Texas, access programs.

II-E. A CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY PROGRAMMERS SPEAK OUT IN DALLAS, TEXAS

Laughter can be heard all the way down the hallway leading to the studio and control room. It sounds as if a party is going on, but it is really a television production team reviewing a program it just finished making. It is an educational talk show, providing valuable specific information to local cable TV viewers. Despite the show's serious content, the producers had fun making it. It is not that they are relaxed professionals; it may have more to do with the fact they they are all volunteers.

With nearly 50 such shows to their credit now, many team members can be considered well-seasoned, but they were veterans even before they started in television production. One was a dress store manager, another, a furniture manufacturer. Also, a minister's secretary, a former electromechanical designer, a retired teacher, and a former marketing professional are part of the team. This cross section of careers and backgrounds combined with the new chemistry of cable access television to produce not only a genuine camaraderie, but a significant community contribution as well.

"I don't think one of us here ever imagined we'd be making TV shows just three years ago," says Bob Long, a retired department-store employee. "Life's just full of surprises, isn't it?" Most of the 25 or so faithful members of the Dallas, Texas, senior TV team never knew each other before seeing announcements placed by the local chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons looking for residents interested in taking advantage of the community TV resources that developed when Dallas received a cable TV franchise.

As different as the individuals involved there are, they, like their counterparts across the country, shared common apprehensions and experiences. "The first time I saw that television equipment, I was absolutely terrified," says Francis Rittenhouse, "but amazingly in a matter of weeks I found it familiar. I don't know how to do it all yet,

AARP members who have taken the plunge into television production.

but I know enough to get the basic job done and I'm no longer afraid of it. Believe me, if I can do it, you can do it."

The Dallas TV team turns out a variety of mostly studio-produced half-hour shows with topics such as pre-retirement planning, physical fitness, computers, marriage after 60, and safe driving. They call the series "Seniors Speak Out." Interspersed in the programs may be short features ranging from energy conservation tips to pointers on how to pack a suitcase. The teams rotate production roles from show to show and quickly learned to appreciate the value of pre-production planning, meeting together for three hours or so before rolling the videotape and recording a program.

Despite their preparation time, the group has learned to expect the unexpected, like the day the set collapsed on the show's guest, or the time the possum brought on by a zoo keeper decided to sit atop his

handler's microphone, providing viewers sounds of his own internal workings as an educational commentary. The access experience has changed the way most team members now look at television. "Among other things I now discover is that the professionals also make mistakes. It's been tremendously heartening," laughs one of the Dallas crew.

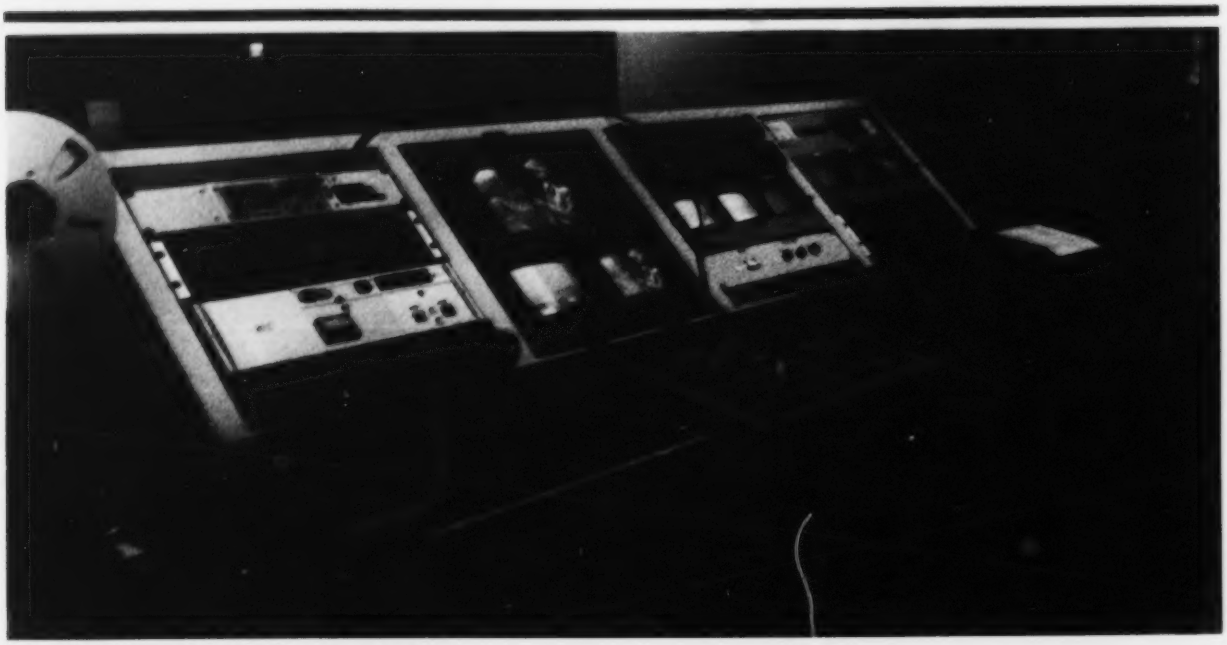
Another member has advice for seniors elsewhere contemplating a plunge into community television: "Do it."

Section III

TELEVISION PRODUCTION: THE TOOLS

If it were possible to bring George Washington back and place him behind the wheel of a new car, it is likely even a bright fellow like George would be overwhelmed by the array of instruments in front of him. Likewise, most people are dazzled during their first visit to a television channel's control room and often imagine the people working there must be electronic geniuses whose expertise could never be emulated by mere mortals like themselves. Well, it just is not so. George Washington likely would be impressed by your ability to drive around town, adjust the air conditioning, and talk to him all at the same time, but you know it is not nearly as complicated as it appears to your novice companion.

Video equipment phobia is a common obstacle for potential producers, but it need



A control room for television production.

not be. You did not master driving a car the first day, and you would not become adept with television equipment overnight either. But if you are of average intelligence, enjoy learning new things, and stay active with video, in time you will be operating that impressive gear proficiently. And you'll have fun doing it. So do not be scared—it is safer than driving a car.

Using video equipment properly does not guarantee that beautiful finished programs will roll routinely off your assembly line. Machines do not make television programs, people do, and creative writers, organizers, and talent are just as vital to video production as equipment operators.

So, don't get hung up on all the gizmos; you will be working not only with the machines, but with lots of people and ideas, too. You probably have lots of experience in these areas, and you can use it for a successful show. TV shows are made by teams, not individuals, and community cable channels offer a fun and fascinating opportunity to meet and work with other people.

It's amazing the number of people who fail to read equipment operation manuals and then resign in frustration when attempting to use TV gear. Such manuals are written, not for engineers, but ordinary folks, and tend to be direct and logical—like video equipment itself. Whatever you do, be sure to ask questions of your video instructor or other experienced persons as you pursue your new hobby.

A word of caution however—video equipment will let you down occasionally, even when you do everything right. Every veteran producer has experienced that sinking feeling when, after an apparently successful taping, the footage is played back complete with weird colors, an obtrusive audio hum, or some other technical catastrophe. It may be a time for a few tears, picking up, and starting over. But stick with it. It is worth it.

No one is expected to master every element of television production, and your role on a production crew may not be concerned directly with using equipment at all. Still it would be wise to know something about it in order to have a realistic picture of the entire project you and your friends are working on. So at least skim over the following descriptions of video equipment needed to make a television production.

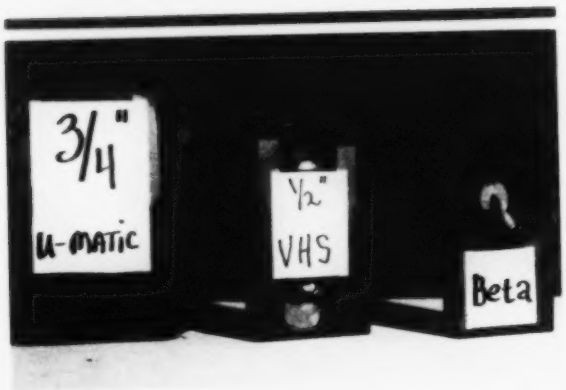
III-A. VIDEOTAPE

Unlike film, videotape can be replayed instantly, and recorded over and over again. Made in the same way as audio tape, videotape is made of metallic particles bonded to a plastic backing. When the tape passes over the recording head of a video recorder, the metallic particles are arranged magnetically to store information. Although videotape comes in widths ranging from one-fourth inch to two inches, most cable access channels use three-fourths inch width tape or one of the two one-half inch type tapes most common with home video recorders—VHS or BETA.

The shape of the tape cassette is often referred to as a "format," and unfortunately different format tapes are incompatible. For example, a VHS tape will not play in a BETA format machine and vice versa. However, any format tape can usually be copied to another format with one machine of each format and simple cables connected between them.

Thanks to technological advances in recent years, both VHS and BETA format tapes and the machines which use them have improved to the point where they are often acceptable for programming on cable channels. This is good news because one-half-inch tape is relatively inexpensive, and it means that people with home video recorders and cameras can often use their personal equipment for making cable access shows.

For the time being, three-fourths-inch tape is the most common format used at access channels. Unlike the VHS and BETA formats, whose machines often operate at three different speeds (and therefore three different time lengths), all three-fourths-inch tapes play at the same speed.



Common video formats.

Excessive heat, dust, humidity, and magnetic fields can adversely affect the video tape, so steer clear of these environmental hazards. It is wise to fast forward and then rewind a new tape before using it to remove any slack that might have resulted from shipment. And, as a general rule, avoid recording on the first minute or so of a tape since this section is most susceptible to defects.

III-B. CAMERAS

One pleasant equipment surprise is that the "eyes" of television, video cameras, are fun to use and fairly easy to operate.

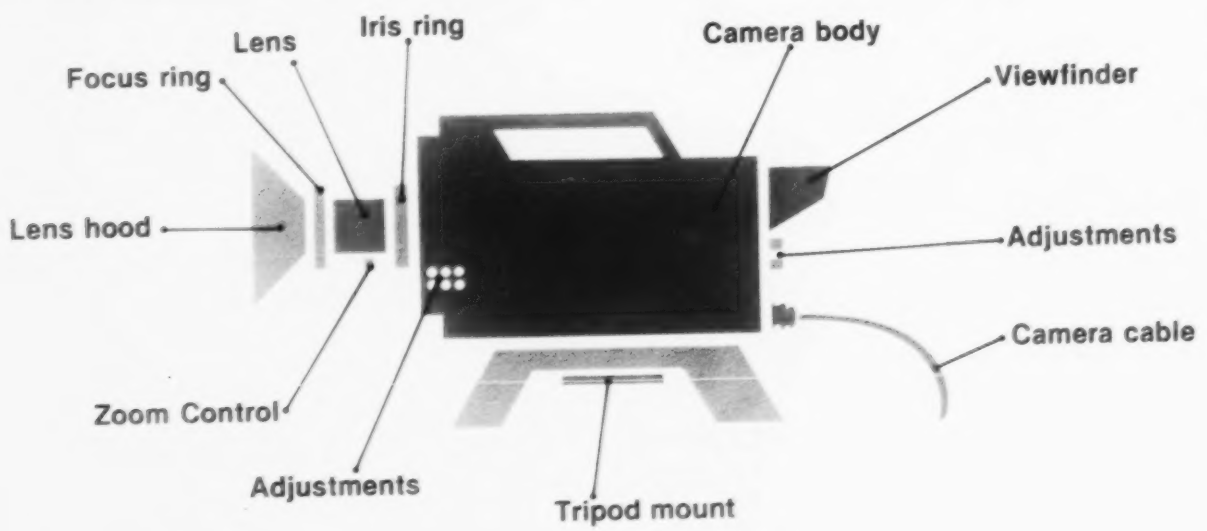
Cameras range in complexity from $200 black-and-white surveillance devices to $100,000 network studio monsters. But most access centers use relatively simple color cameras costing in the $1,000 to $7,000 range.

The most "technical" part of basic camera operation is probably making the proper adjustments for the particular lighting environment. These include filter selection, white balancing (obtaining correct color), and iris or aperture setting. Your video instructor can explain these features or you can get the explanation from the camera's operation manual.

The accompanying figure shows the main parts of a typical video camera.

Don't drop the camera, get it wet, or aim it at any bright light such as the sun or a studio lamp. Cameras generally have sensitive pick-up tubes which can be permanently damaged by exposure to a bright light by a process known as "burn-in."

Most community television productions take place in TV studios where cameras are mounted on tripods. Adjusting the tripod's tilt (up or down) and pan (back and forth) controls so that they move smoothly for you is important before the shooting begins.



The main parts of a video camera.

This cameraman has mastered the craft.

Once the show is underway, the studio camera operator's main job is to follow the director's instructions coming via the headset one wears. In most productions this involves only panning, tilting, zooming (in and out), and focusing the camera's lens. It's easy to grasp these fundamentals, but the mark of a more experienced operator is how smoothly he or she executes these basic moves.

The following are some explanatory figures of common camera shots.

Common Camera Shots

This is an example of a long shot (LS).

This is an example of a medium close-up shot (MCU).

This is an example of a medium shot (MS).

This is an example of a close-up shot (CU).

Here is an extreme close-up shot (ECU).

Here is a two shot (TS).

This is called an over-the-shoulder shot (OTS).

III-C. PLAYERS/RECORDERS/EDITORS

Video cassette recorders (VCRs) are perhaps the foremost consumer product of the 1980s; they have moved from novelty to necessity for millions of homes within just a few years. While their chief uses are for playing rental movies and recording programming from the television, VCRs when combined with cameras can transform masses of passive TV viewers into active individual producers of television programming.

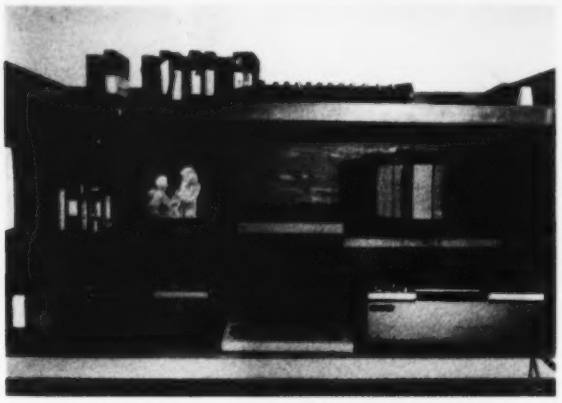
VCRs have the same common functions found on audio cassette recorders (PLAY, RECORD, FAST FORWARD, REWIND, PAUSE, STOP, EJECT). They generally have inputs and outputs which combine both the picture and the sound (in what is called an RF signal) as well as separate video and audio inputs and outputs. Most community cable TV channels use three-fourths-inch format tape machines which differ from the more familiar VHS and BETA format VCRs principally by being larger and generally delivering a better quality picture.

Video tape editing revolutionized broadcast television by providing an alternative to high-risk live programming and time-consuming film development and splicing. Today's video tape editing machines electronically transfer selected pictures and sounds from one or more tapes onto a master tape upon which a program is built.

The hardest part of editing for most people is deciding what they want the edit to accomplish. There's usually the choice of adding a picture or tracks of two audio channels to the program.

You, not the edit machine, make the creative decisions, which is why you want to have developed an edit script before you approach the edit console. (See Section IV-C on scriptwriting.)

The edit console itself usually consists of two VCRs, two monitors, and a small edit controller. You put your raw material in one VCR (watch it on one monitor) and transfer selected segments to the master tape on the other VCR where you are compiling



A typical editing system might look like this.

your program (watch the finished product on the other monitor). The controller unit allows you to search through the tapes and instruct the machines to perform the edit decisions you make.

Thirty frames of video information are recorded on each second of tape. It's possible to edit from one ordinary VCR to another, but the edit points will often contain a glitch (a momentary break-up of the picture) because the edit did not occur at the start of a new frame of information. Editing systems solve this problem by having both source (raw material) and record (master) tapes back up (called "pre-roll") a bit (usually five seconds) then roll forward, linking up precisely sometime before the edit point, thereby insuring a "clean" edit.

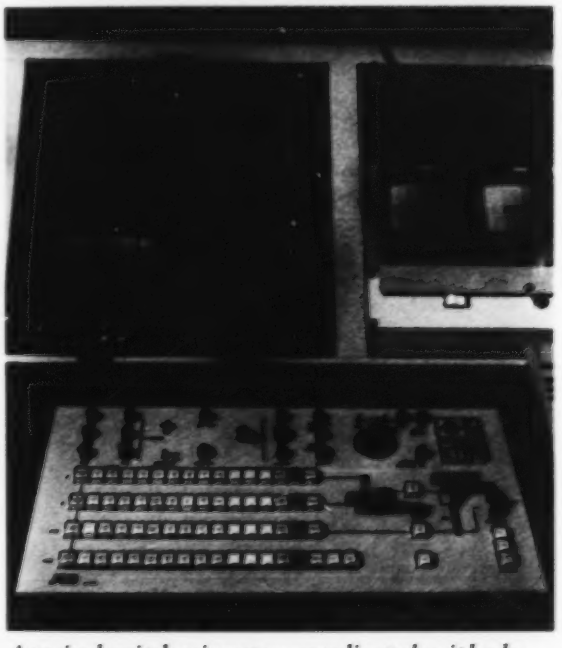
The editing system is a specialized, though often accessible, component of video production. Usually the professional staff at the community center will assist you with the technical and time-consuming elements of editing. Keep in mind that one of community television's strongest offerings—live local programming—contains no editing at all.

III-D. THE SWITCHER

The most complicated-looking piece of TV production room gear is probably the switcher, sometimes called the special-effects generator (SEG). With its levers poised between rows of lighted buttons and several video monitors mounted above, the switcher looks as if it belongs in a spaceship.

The person operating the switcher is termed the technical director (TD), although the technical demands of operation are often minimal. The director instructs the TD, but in many local shows the same person performs both production roles. The basic job of the TD is to tell (via a headset intercom) the camera operators what shots to get, watch the results on the monitors for each camera, and choose among them as the "program" by pressing one of the lighted buttons. It's really rather straightforward.

The special effects most switchers feature include the ability to combine video sources (such as two cameras) by fading from one to the other, wiping sources (the ability to split the screen and have two pictures showing simultaneously), and keying sources (superimposing parts of one onto another, as in the case of a camera card title—see Section III-F, "Graphics"). Mastering all these creative effects certainly is not necessary to make a good television show. Interesting community TV shows more often feature believable, informative people, not flashy special effects.



A typical switcher is not as complicated as it looks.

III-E. THE FILM CHAIN

Instant cameras, satellite transmissions, your local cable access show—the technological juggernaut—rolls on, providing easier, faster ways of recording reality. Video is versatile, allowing other visual media to be copied for TV relatively easily.

Many older community members have experience with 8mm or super-8mm film, and a home movie of the city's Christmas parade before the downtown renovation took place might prove quite interesting to local cable viewers. Transferring film to videotape can be done with a film chain which simply directs the film's projection through filters and into a TV camera's lens. An even less elaborate method which often yields acceptable results is to project a fill onto a screen as one normally does, and record the screen image with a video camera.

Another medium often transferred to video via a film chain would be 35mm slides. The shape (height versus length) of a visual image is called its aspect ratio and it differs for various mediums. A TV screen has an aspect ratio of about 3:4 while a 35mm slide's is about 2:3. In transferring a horizontally oriented slide to video you have a decision to make. If you want to fill the TV screen with the slide's image the extreme right and left side of the slide will be cut off. The alternative is to zoom the video camera's lens out a bit revealing the entire length of the slide but also black space at the top and bottom of the TV screen.

A film chain transfers different film sources to videotape.

III-F. GRAPHICS

Your program can be more informative, visually interesting, and complete if you use titles and credits that are clear and appealing. Graphics can range from simple letters written on a blackboard to sophisticated computer-generated designs.

By using a switcher's key effect, black letters on a white card can usually be colorized and superimposed over another video source (e.g., a camera shot, a slide, a colored background). Here is where artistic inclinations such as calligraphy can add a unique touch to your program's look. Keep in mind that TV screen's 3:4 shape (see previous section) in preparing camera cards and avoid writing near the card's edge.

An even easier way of making attractive titles and credits is to use a character generator, available in most community access studio facilities. The C-Gen, as it is often called, looks very much like a typewriter and allows the operator to store information on different "pages," which can be displayed when desired. Before your talk show begins you'd probably store the names of each of your guests on different pages of the C-Gen. For example, when Maggie Smith first speaks, your director may call for "C-Gen page 4 up" to identify her with "Red Cross Volunteer" written below her name on the screen. Operating the character generator is fun, easy and often an early assignment for new crew members of a production team.

III-G. THE SET

One paradox of television is that while it captures reality probably better than any other medium, it is illusionary as well. TV

The character generator operates very much like a typewriter.

tends to exaggerate and alter images, but this phenomenon can be used to your advantage.

Simply put, how things look "on camera" is what counts visually, not how they appear to your eye in person. The spiffy desks on the six o'clock news may primarily be a styrofoam facade, and likewise, that scratched old coffee table in your garage may metamorphose into a handsome complement to your studio talk show.

The "set" is the environment in which your production takes place, and its construction can be one of the most creative aspects of television work. Often overlooked as a crucial program element, a well-conceived ensemble of an attractive backdrop and a few stage props can have as much to do with your show's perceived credibility as the profound statements of your special guests. And remember, your set may not be in a television studio at all, but could instead be located in someone's living room, an auditorium, or the great outdoors.

Experiment with set design, but always with the perspective of the camera's eye. And bear in mind some aspects of TV's illusionary nature. For example, on an interview program, place chairs closer together than you would normally—TV will exaggerate the distance between them.

The set's function is to promote subtly the program's intent. One reality of most community television facilities is that there are a limited number of backdrops available. They may be cycloramas (continuous hanging material that wraps around the set) or flats (wood frames with material stretched over them). Chances are these items are of the neutral colors like light blue or tan which look best on television. But if you don't add something to them, your health care call-in show may look disturbingly like last week's municipal sewage discussion program.

A couple of well-placed house plants or theme posters can give your show the unique look you need. But don't overdo with a background so "busy" that it distracts attention from the program's main elements, usually people.

Remove glass from any pictures you hang and align shiny posters so that they don't give off glare. Which brings up the next topic—lighting.

A basic studio set is all you need to get started.

III-H. LIGHTING

However marvelous today's video cameras, the human eye remains a more remarkable instrument in terms of light sensitivity. For this reason, video cameras often require supplemental light sources in situations where the eye does just fine.

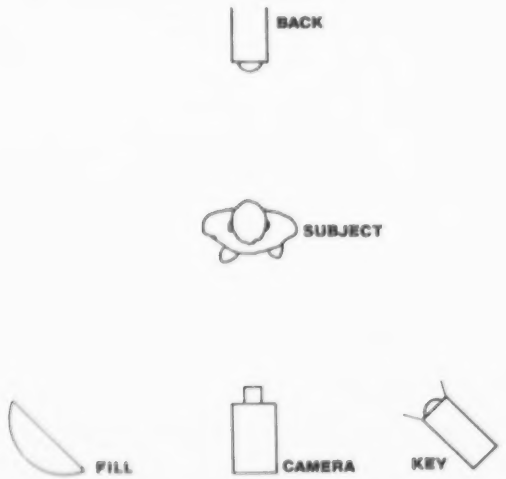
Besides adequately illuminating the subject, TV lighting conveys a mood or feel to a program. Good lighting usually results from both an application of some fundamentals and plenty of experimentation to attain the look you seek in a particular setting.

Television studios are usually designed to incorporate the elements of what is called three-point lighting, providing a camera image that is not only bright enough, but also conveys a sense of depth to the two dimensional TV screen as well. Lights are classified more by their placement on a production set than by their model or type. Typically, they are hung from a grid above the set, and can be moved and aimed relatively easily.

The key light is the primary light on your subject and should be shone down on the subject from an angle of about 40 degrees to the side of the main camera's line of sight. The key light is sometimes called a spot light. To the other side of the camera is placed the second component of three-point lighting, the fill light, and, as its name suggests, it floods the set providing general illumination and diminishing somewhat the shadows produced by the key light.

The final element of three-point lighting is the back light directed down from behind on the talent's shoulders lending a sense of depth to the picture. Additionally in a studio situation, there may be fourth type of light, the set lights, which highlight the backdrops in place. Adjusting your lights for that optimal look is perhaps the most time-consuming production task in preparing for a studio shoot. Be sure to allow adequate time for this important consideration.

When taping outside the studio, there is often not an opportunity to employ the classical three-point lighting scheme. One or



Three-point lighting uses a fill, key, and back light to illuminate the subject.

two well-placed portable lights, however, can often yield acceptable results in shooting indoors. Avoid shining lights directly at people, but rather "bounce" light off walls and ceilings to affect a "softer" look.

Outdoors, even in cloudy weather, adequate illumination usually exists. In fact, one must often take care to avoid too much sky in a camera shot since the automatic iris of the lens will close down, leaving the sky blue but your ground-based subjects dark. For the same reason, do not place indoor subjects in front of windows unless you're purposely seeking the silhouette effect which will result. If you cannot avoid the sky outdoors or windows indoors, manually open up the lens' iris—the blue sky may turn white but at least your subject will be visible.

III-I. AUDIO EQUIPMENT

Perhaps because television is such a visual medium, there's sometimes a tendency for new producers to overlook (or underhear) sound quality as an important element of a successful TV show. Without good audio, however, your program will lack credibility no matter how slick the pictures are.

Good sound starts with proper selection and placement of microphones (mics), and

elimination of unwanted sound sources from the set. Closing windows and doors, temporarily turning off heating and air conditioning blowers, and simply asking for quiet among folks in the vicinity are first steps for recording-quality audio.

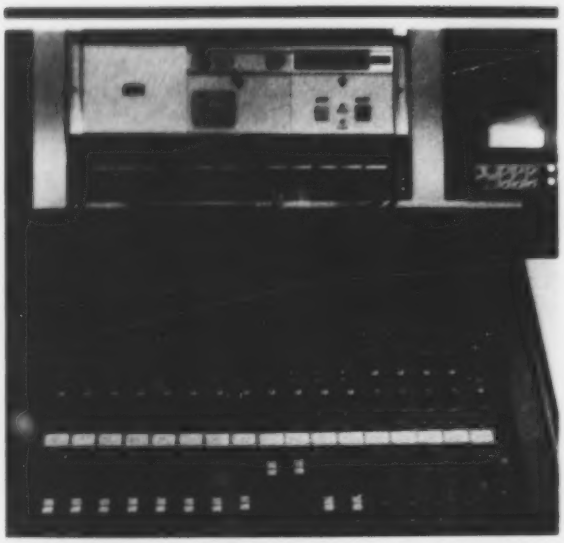
Mics have pick-up patterns—ranges within which they receive sound, and these vary from omnidirectional to unidirectional. The omnidirectional, with a wide pick-up pattern, is probably your best bet for a roundtable discussion where you are limited to one stationary mic. But capturing the mockingbird's song in the chestnut tree above may call for a unidirectional mic with a narrow pick-up pattern.

Most cameras have microphones attached to or built in them. While these camera mics are occasionally useful, usually there are opportunities to place microphones closer to the sound source than the video camera's vantage point. And generally, the closer you get, the better the sound.

Sometimes closeness requires that lavalier microphones be clipped onto clothing or be worn around the neck of on-camera talent. Care must be taken so that these microphones do not bounce against buttons or jewelry, or a scraping noise, inaudible even to the talent, will result. Some microphones are battery operated and must be turned on and off, while others have no such power source.

Microphone cables may lead directly into a videotape recorder or to an audio mixer where several sound sources can be isolated or combined before being sent on to the videotape recorder. Each sound source coming into a mixer has a separate knob or slide, and your first job as a production crew member may be to listen and adjust microphone levels on a panel discussion show. It is fun and fairly easy to do.

Most videotape formats have two separate audio channels allowing for later additions to your program's main sound, which may be recorded on only one channel. Dubbing in a "voice-over" on the other audio channel permits a Monday morning quarterback to describe brilliantly footage he



An audio mixer allows several sound sources to be combined before being added to the videotape.

shot at Saturday's game while preserving the authentic crowd noise on the first channel. The two channels facilitate audio creativity, and music, from cassettes or recorders, can be an important part of this editing process.

Most community TV VCRs have inputs for two different types of audio signals they receive. One, termed "mic," is for microphones, and the other, called "line," is for sound sources such as another VCR or audio-cassette player. A switch on the VCR also may allow the sound level to be either automatically adjusted or manipulated by turning a knob.

Many VCRs and audio mixers have little meters which display the volume level (avoid the red danger zone), but a better check is to listen (via an earplug or headset) as you are recording. An audio level looking good on the meter may contain static or cut out intermittently. Trust your ears, not your eyes, most when it comes to sound quality.

If you do have the misfortune of recording audio that contains a hum or a hiss, it may be possible to correct it a bit by running the VCR's audio output through an equalizer during the editing process. More sophisticated than simple bass and treble tone controls, an equalizer allows you to filter out certain unwanted frequencies of sound.

III-J. THE PORTAPAK

While a TV studio is designed for making television programs attractive, the real world lies beyond its doors. Here is where the most interesting video footage is recorded. Field or location shoots differ from those taking place in the studio in at least two fundamental ways: there is less control over the environment, and generally there is less equipment to operate.

The basic gear used in a field production usually consists of one camera and one portable VCR. The combination is called a portapak although sometimes the term extends to ancillary equipment like a tripod, microphone and cables, portable lights, carrying cases, etc.

Toting the portapak about is a chore, and it is helpful to have assistance. Fortunately, television equipment is rapidly becoming smaller, lighter, and easier to use. The introduction of cam-corders (where the videotape recorder is built into the camera) is a big boost for older persons tackling TV field productions. The future promises even more access to these creative tools.

When disassembled, the portapak camera fits into its own case.

Portable VCRs and cameras generally operate on 12-volt direct current (DC) obtainable either through rechargeable batteries or by converting 110-volt alternating current (AC), the type commonly found in conventional electrical wiring. A shoebox-shaped device called an AC adaptor does the converting. The operator simply plugs one of the adaptor's cables into a wall socket and a second cable into the VCR to begin recording. (Be sure equipment is turned off when plugging in.) If there is AC power around, use it, for it is more reliable than batteries which can require recharging after a short period, particularly in cold weather.

While portable cameras are designed to be held on a person's shoulder, it takes considerable practice for most people to acquire the steadiness needed for a good shot. For this reason, use a tripod whenever possible, and try to avoid perhaps the most common error made by beginners—zooming frequently, panning quickly, tilting dramatically—too much movement, period. Easy does it.

Before borrowing portable equipment from your community TV facility, be sure to have a checklist prepared for all the items you will need on your shoot. If possible, make a pre-production trip to your field location and note such things as placement of electrical outlets, lighting conditions, and room acoustics. Then decide where you are going to position your camera, microphone(s), and (if necessary) portable lights. On the day of the shoot, be sure to allow yourself ample time to set up the portable equipment at the community TV facility and perform a test recording to ensure that the equipment is working alright and that you are confident of how to operate it.

Almost always the footage you shoot in the field will require some editing back at the center, if only to put on opening and closing credits. While location shoots generally require you to record more material than you will ultimately use (see also Section IV-C), take advantage of what

is called in-camera editing to minimize the post-production work.

In-camera editing simply means you use the camera's pause trigger to record only scenes you may use eventually. For example, if you want the autumn foliage of the two maple trees at opposite ends of the village square, don't keep the tape running as you pan across the construction activity in the middle of the square. Record the red maple, pause the tape, pan across and get the orange maple in view, and press pause again to resume recording. You have just made an in-camera edit.

If possible, include a portable monitor with your portapak equipment so you can instantly review your work and share the excitement of the videotaping experience with others. Also bring along a simple RF-type cable which permits you to display your video on a conventional TV set.

III-K. ODDS AND ENDS

While we have been describing the large components of video equipment, some minor items are just as critical for the show to go on. Someday, somewhere, someone is going to become a multimillionaire by inventing a universal audio and video connector, but for now there are about a dozen common connector types used in TV production. Some are familiar, such as the kind you use with your stereo system, while others are probably new to you and have funny names. You can learn them pretty quickly.

There are other pieces of video equipment used in community cable TV that you may not work with directly, but you should at least be able to identify. The little green or amber waveform monitor, usually mounted above the switcher, gives an electronic representation of the video signal. Someone familiar with reading the waveform monitor will watch it during recording to ensure that the video signal level does not go too high or problems in both the picture and sound could result. Next to the waveform monitor may be a similarly sized vectorscope, providing data about the color correctness.

Your community TV channel may have one or more Time Base Correctors (TBCs) which help smooth out technical problems with videotapes. Another modest-looking but expensive piece of equipment is the modulator, which allows your show to be sent throughout the local cable system.

Section IV

TELEVISION PRODUCTION: THE PROCESS

Bringing an idea to life as a television program requires more than just having adequate tools and players. Even with state-of-the-art equipment and an abundance of experienced operators, there will be no show unless a concept is created, and specific activities are identified and coordinated. Organizing ideas, people, events, and things is a big production in any area of life, and old stand-bys like perseverance and a sense of humor are staples of the successful TV producer.

Whatever the hassles and work of television production though, few activities offer such excitement and opportunity. And nothing else quite matches the thrill of flipping on the set at home, sitting back, and watching *your* program on television. So, to get your show on the road, read this, "The Process" section, and learn how to put it all together.

IV-A. GETTING STARTED/TRAINING

You should be able to use your local public access channel without having to take a production training course. Making announcements, appearing on talk shows, or otherwise performing on a community channel are ways of using local cable TV facilities without having to demonstrate video production skills. Most people's involvement with access channels is at this talent level, and that's just fine. But you may want more. You may want to become a television producer or member of a TV production team.

So let's assume you have decided to take the plunge into learning more about television production. Where exactly do you begin? As indicated in an earlier section, a stop at your city government's department that handles cable TV affairs or your local cable company office should help you locate access opportunities that exist in your community. Let's also assume your area is one of the places that does have a public access center providing training and assistance for community TV programming.

The first step then might be to call the access center, mention your interest in producing community programming and ask if it would be convenient for you to visit sometime soon. Most centers welcome your interest and will do all they can to accommodate you, but often they are understaffed and have waiting lists for their training programs. Still, during an initial visit, a short tour of the studio and production control room can often be arranged, and you should request any written materials which may be available to gain an idea of the center's resources and policies.

Community television channels offer training in video production.

In some locations, training and use of production equipment is entirely free, while other locales may assess modest fees for these services. Some places even supply free video tape for your productions. Inquire about any fees that are charged; you will need this data to plan your productions.

Find out all the specifics you can about the training program. Is it mostly equipment oriented? Does it cover script writing and set design? Are there workshops for those not interested in the technical side of TV production? How about advanced courses? These things do differ from place to place so find out what is taught at your community's center.

As a generalization, most access basic production courses provide about eight to fifteen hours of instruction to classes comprised of a dozen persons or fewer. Since a TV production usually requires a crew of people working together, it is to your advantage to have any interested friends or organizational associates take the course at the same time you do.

Don't let a waiting list dampen your enthusiasm to get started. It may be a few months before you can actually take the production course, but there are several things you can do in the interim which will prepare you for your production career.

Many centers encourage persons to come and observe productions in progress. You can learn a considerable amount just watching an experienced team at work. Take along a small notebook and jot down your thoughts and questions as you observe the process. Inquire about the possibility of volunteering at your local access center. Centers generally have an on-going need for all sorts of non-technical help. If you have the time, volunteer to answer phones, lick stamps, or redo the bulletin board—whatever needs to be done at your community's facility. You will learn a lot just by being there.

Another useful activity before your production training begins (and after it for that matter) is to watch television in a new, critical way. After their initial introduction to TV production, many people "see" normal television in a very different way than before. They become aware of camera angles and techniques, the number of cameras, and how special effects are accomplished. For example, that slide of the White House is not really projected over the anchorperson's shoulder. One camera that sees the slide is electronically added to another camera seeing the news reader in a special effect which may be a "wipe" or "key." Keep that note pad by the easy chair and make a list of your observations and questions. Often you can learn the answers from an experienced producer or staff member at your access center.

When you begin the training course itself do be realistic and don't be too hard on yourself. We all learn from our mistakes and no one expects you to be an accomplished producer after a short training course. By all means, have fun! It really is an exciting adventure, and if you do not know all your classmates before you start, chances are you certainly will by the end of the course. Many good friendships and some top-notch production teams have developed among classmates in training programs.

We will now examine some of the actual elements involved in the process of making a television show.

IV-B. THE THREE Ps

No, we're not talking about the three little pigs here, but rather the conventional

components which comprise a TV project. They are: pre-production; production; and post-production. Not all public access programs are made according to the rules and suggestions that follow. It is not always necessary to have an elaborately written plan for every element of your show. But it can help.

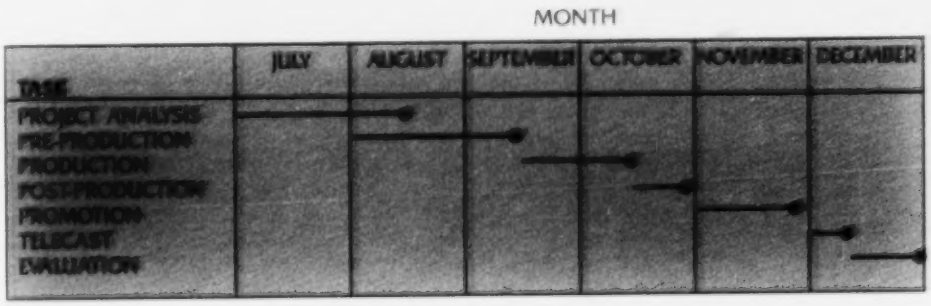
Pre-production is basically a planning phase. Every program starts with an idea, but that idea should be translated into a script and a sequence of activities leading to a final program. Typically, a good deal of coordination of schedules is involved, based on availability of production facilities, crew members, and talent. Another element of the pre-production process is budget development. Your center may charge some fees for the facilities and videotape. There are props to be made for the set, copies of the script to run off, and some puttering around town in your car to help pull things together. The main cost of access productions is usually just your time, but don't overlook some actual costs you may incur, however small they might be.

Once scripts, schedules, and budgets are determined, it's time to move on to the second P—the production itself. The term production specifically refers to the actual videotaping or live telecast of the performance, speech, or whatever event is the subject of your show. Excitement, anticipation, and nervousness are all at their peak, and it is here where the best producers shine. While almost every production has some unforeseen elements, good producers basically have organized things to proceed relatively smoothly. And they know how to keep their cool when the unexpected develops. The director (who may also be the producer) is in charge and is responsible for assigning specific tasks for crew members.

Even in the simplest of studio programs, the production process usually is not over when the host says "good night" to viewers. Unless your show is telecasted live, items such as theme music and credits often are added to the program after the shooting stops. And in any "location" (i.e., non-studio) shoot, the tape must come back to the production facility to be edited. All of these activities taking place after the actual taping are referred to as post-production. See the section on "The Tools" to get an insight to the individual steps involved in the editing process.

Actually the three Ps themselves can be thought to be preceded and followed by still more activities. Even before the idea for a program was born, you may have conducted a project analysis. Let's say your civic group has a drive to help deaf children in the community. There is a need for publicizing the effort, and someone suggests a public access television show might be a good way to spread the word. Likewise even after the post-production when the video tape is finished, there remains the job of making potential viewers aware of its existence and telecast times. Program promotion itself is very important and will be discussed further on in "The Process" section. Finally, you will want to evaluate the effect of your television program. You will learn from both successes and mistakes, making for an even better program next time.

A good way to organize your total production planning is to develop a time line for the project. It might look similar to the accompanying example.



IV-C. SCRIPTWRITING

For your initial concept to develop into a successful television show, it must be translated into specific directions for everyone involved to follow. For a camera operator, the directions spell out which shot to use for each scene; for actors, it is the places they occupy on the set and the words they speak; and for an audio technician, it may be when to fade in the beautiful music. The script then is the basis of the entire production, and its development is the most creative aspect of television production.

Of course programs do not always have a word-for-word script before they begin. The person interviewed on the talk show is not instructed how to respond (although some questions are pre-determined); the news reporter does not write before reaching the scene of the crime; and the play-by-play of the ballgame is hardly a foregone conclusion. Still, even in these instances, there is likely to be a standard opening and closing for the program and some agreed upon concepts for crew members during the shoot. We can call that a script.

Many new producers have difficulty advancing from that original great idea to a workable plan to actualize it. One helpful technique can be to approach the task beginning with a short statement of the program's intent and format. Such a statement is called a treatment script. Here is a simple example:

Treatment Script

"Taking Off—The Air Age Comes to Springcity" will be a two-camera studio interview show hosted by Shirley Taylor. Her guest will be Jim Nelson who was involved with the opening of our community's first commercial airport in 1955. Shirley will introduce Jim and ask him a few questions. Then a video clip of an old movie made at the airport's dedication will be shown. Shirley and Jim will discuss the silent clip as it plays. The rest of the half-hour show will be more interview and three or four more clips of early airport scenes. Shirley will close the show with announcements of coming community events.

The treatment suggests the main elements of the program. Ultimately though the script requires more detail, particularly information about the picture, sound, and time — the main program elements. A final script for the show might begin as shown on page 35. (See pages 22-23 for camera abbreviations, e.g., MCU = Medium Close-up.)

Scriptwriting for television differs from other types of writing because TV is primarily a visual medium, and the spoken word is usually a complement to the pictures. TV has its own script style of short simple sentences, even just sentence fragments, with considerable repetition of information and themes.

Most studio-based programs can be scripted something like the example on page 35, but field or location productions (i.e., outside the studio) may require a somewhat different approach.

Say you want a program showcasing an unusual vegetable garden in your community and its equally interesting owner, Edith Jones. You get your loquacious friend, Fred Moore, to serve as program host, and before setting out on the production you write an opening segment for the show. Fred will be in front of Edith's house, welcome viewers to the show, turn and walk to the door, ring the bell, and ask Edith if she'd kindly provide a short tour of her backyard plot.

The program opening itself is really a series of three or four distinct scenes. You may shoot each separately and later edit them together. It's wise to record each scene at least twice from different angles. The edited product may look like you had two cameras rather than the single portapak you actually used.

Once Edith agrees to the tour, you need a transition shot to get Fred and Edith to the backyard. A long-shot of the two walking down the front stairs and around the side of the house would do. During the garden tour you generally may have a two-shot of Fred and Edith at various locations among the

FINAL SCRIPT
TITLE: The Air Age Comes to Springcity

LENGTH: 28 Minutes
PRODUCER: Shirley Taylor

TIME	VIDEO	AUDIO
0:00	BLACK. FADE to CAM 1 LS-Two Shot	FADE up theme music
0:03	SUPER Title GRAPHIC	
0:10	FADE SUPER	FADE down theme music
0:12	CUT to CAM 2 MCU Shirley	"Hi, I'm Shirley Taylor. Welcome to "The Air Age Comes To Springcity." My guest is someone known to many people around here—Jim Higgins. Welcome to the show Jim."
	CUT to CAM 1 MCU Jim	
	CUT to CAM 2 MCU Shirley	You were among the group of local people who helped bring an airport to Springcity. When was that?
	CUT to CAM 1 MCU Jim	(Jim's response)
approx. 2:00	CUT to CAM 2 MCU Shirley	You took some movies back on the airport's dedication day. Let's take a look at some of them.
	CUT to CAM 1-2 shot	
	CUT to VTR footage	(comment)

vegetables. When Edith reveals her secret of growing great asparagus you may first tape her talking, but later be sure to get a close-up of that fabulous asparagus to splice in as a video insert. (See Section III-C, "Editing.")

Before you leave the garden patch, get long shots of Fred and Edith together at each location and reaction shot close-ups of Fred nodding his head yes. All these shots taped after the primary two-shot scenes can be considered cutaways or cover shots and will be valuable in editing a polished-looking program.

In general then, a good field production usually requires you to shoot a lot more tape than you will use in the final product. Read about the portapak (Section II-J) for more location production tips.

Once you complete taping in the field, the first post-production task is reviewing and logging your tape footage. This means watching, timing, and evaluating each shot. Record your observations on a log sheet shown on page 36.

Once logging is completed, it is time to develop the final script which you will use at the edit machine. The garden tour show might end up looking similar to the edit script shown on page 37.

LOG SHEET

PRODUCTION: Grow Your Own

TAPE NUMBER: #1

DATE: AUGUST 4

TAPE TIME	VIDEO	AUDIO	COMMENTS
:00–:30	Scene 1, Take 1, Fred's intro in front of house	good, except he's a little nervous	could be better
:30–1:05	Take 2, same as above	good, he's upbeat and natural	use this one
1:05–1:15	Scene 2, Take 1 Fred walks to house	background sounds OK	pretty good
1:15–1:25	Take 2, same as above, but lighting is bad, shadows	background sounds OK	don't use

One final script note—music. Almost every TV show requires at least a musical opening and ending. The mood and theme of a show is greatly affected by the choice of melody and sounds which accompany it. While one must be careful using copyrighted materials (see Section IV-E), make a point of choosing music that enhances your program. And don't overlook local talent who might create original tunes for your original video production.

IV-D. PROGRAM FORMATS

Community television is so new that its identity is still evolving. But in the few years it has been around, important lessons have been learned about what types of programming community cable channels can best deliver.

With budgets broadcasters would consider laughable, and with novice producers and crews working as volunteers, community TV channels have little chance of competing with the networks in terms of turning out flashy products. Some community channels do indeed attract significant numbers of local viewers, not by attempting to copy sophisticated network formulas, but by delivering types of programming unavailable anywhere else.

Community programming's simplest offering is information and announcements listed on so-called alpha-numeric channels. These can be remarkably effective in getting the word out about a group's upcoming reunion, car wash, or stage play. Still, announcements like these can hardly be considered television programs, and sadly, community TV offerings in many places are limited to such bulletin-board channels.

What are the programming formats that community TV excels at? They include complete coverage of public meetings and press conferences, lectures by prominent local leaders and distinguished visitors, informational and educational studio inter-

EDIT SCRIPT

TITLE: Grow Your Own

TIME: 15 minutes

PRODUCER: George Mitchell

TIME	VIDEO	AUDIO
:00–:10	Title Graphic "GROW YOUR OWN" character generator on green background	theme music
:11–:40	Tape 1, Scene 1 Take 2. Fred introduces show	"Hi, I'm Fred Moore and I love great salads . . . let's see if she's home."
:41–:51	Tape 1, Scene 2, Take 1. Fred walks to door	background sounds

views, and live call-in shows which give viewers instant access to communicating with large numbers of their neighbors. These programming formats share a number of important elements: they are local in nature, they deliver important data, and they are relatively easy to produce.

Call-in shows provide for the immediate interaction of the community audience. Social agency representatives may be fielding questions about local services, or experts (brokers, golf pros, therapists) might be dispensing professional advice. There is always the possibility of some energetic host entertaining an "anything goes" call-in program, and a little ingenuity can produce a fast-paced game show that the whole town can play together.

But whether it's "Ask Your Mayor" or "Trivia Tonight," beyond a basic studio set you merely need a few telephone lines and a couple of volunteers to answer them when the calls start coming in. One basic choice involved in the call-in format is deciding if the off-camera volunteers will write down the caller's comments and pass them to the talent to read, or if the caller's voice will be put directly on the program via an inexpensive speaker phone system.

If the caller's voice is live, a simple screening process should be developed for the off-camera volunteers. The persons screening should determine if the caller really wants to make an on-air comment, understands the nature of the program, and the bounds of good taste. When the caller passes the screening procedure, the volunteer routes the call to the on-camera talent. Live call-in programs are one of community TV's most exciting offerings.

Another successful simple access TV format is the "wrap-around" program where a local introduction and follow-up discussion wrap-around a longer main program which may be professionally produced. Many excellent free or low-cost loaner films and tapes are available to agencies, clubs, and even individuals, with permission granted for telecast on cable channels. Most access centers permit such programs to be shown when accompanied by a wrap-around, connecting the program to the local community.

Your hometown arts council, for example, might introduce a series of programs available from the National Gallery of Art and follow each presentation with a panel discussing the show and using the opportunity to publicize the local membership drive.

***Producing public meetings for television is a** valuable community service.*

The benefits derived by the community in receiving access are considerable. Interest in local government can grow substantially, awareness of area agencies and services heighten perceptively, and perhaps most importantly—people often feel empowered in their community's affairs. By helping to produce such programming, you will contribute a valuable public service.

Community TV channels may have an occasional locally produced documentary or variety entertainment show, but more typically they offer no-frills talk shows and other straightforward programming. You can be creative in developing your own access show, just be realistic about the production time involved to achieve your purpose.

The possibilities for personal expression are virtually limitless with this new medium of community television. Start modestly and build on your video experiences. You will be helping to plow new common ground while turning up some self-discoveries in the process.

How-to programs are an effective community television format.

IV-E. LEGALITIES

As a novice producer you should be aware of some legal principles which may affect your use of community cable TV facilities. Generally speaking, you, not the cable company or access staff, are responsible for the content of your program. Some stations even have a policy of not reviewing your program before it is telecast lest they pass judgment on its suitability. You'll probably be asked to sign a form, declaring that your show contains no materials which are libelous or slanderous, obscene, or commercial in nature. You should not ascribe your program to AARP, the NFLCP, or any other organization without their direct involvement and written authorization.

Although the vast majority of community TV fare raises no serious legal issues, potentially the area of greatest concern is probably libel, a representation that gives an erroneous, damaging impression of another person. If you suspect that someone down the block has stolen your golf clubs, don't blurt out his name on a talk show unless he's actually been convicted of the crime.

The law does distinguish between private citizens and public figures when it comes to libel, so it is alright to call an elected official incompetent on TV, even if it's you, not he, who's really incompetent.

The key thing to remember is, get your facts correct and be conscientious. Remember you are liable for the content of your program.

Another area of legal concern is invasion of privacy. While you might think a

series of scenes of lovers kissing in the park would make an endearing video, a person who sees his or her spouse smooching with a stranger in one of your programs isn't likely to be amused.

Strictly speaking, anyone appearing on your program should sign a model-release form, giving you permission to be part of your show. People appearing at a public event are generally exempt from invasion of privacy considerations, so it's not necessary to leaflet the bleachers at the ball game with release forms in order to comply with the law.

Copyright law may affect your programming ideas more than concepts of liability and invasion of privacy. Copyrights exist to protect the creators of prose, poetry, photographs, music, etc., but that doesn't mean you cannot use a quote from a book on your show. The principle of fair use allows some limited culling of a creator's work, but generalizations are difficult. Some of the criteria used by courts in defining fair use include the purpose of the use (e.g., commercial versus nonprofit or educational), and the effect of use on the value of the copyrighted work (e.g., will it damage the creator's potential market?).

The originator or distributor of the material you'd like to use may grant you permission to use somewhat more of a work than what fair use would allow. Many creators grant permission when they learn their work is being used in a non-commercial setting. If you cannot get permission, you can usually purchase the rights to use copyrighted material in your programming, and this may be the safest route to take if you are unsure if your intended use may violate the law.

Your local station should be looked to as a resource regarding these matters. For more detailed information about copyright and fair use, the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers publishes an excellent book called *Copyright and You*. It clearly outlines and defines copyright and fair use issues in local access programming. This book can be ordered for $4.50 by writing the NFLCP at 906 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E., 2nd floor, Washington, DC 20003.

Perhaps the most significant legal consideration that could affect your community TV activities has nothing to do with program content. Rather, if you check out portable equipment from your local access center, you are probably responsible for its safety. If you have $20,000 worth of video gear in the back seat of your car, it's unwise to leave it there overnight, even if the doors are locked. Use common sense. Remember you are responsible for the equipment. If something happens to it while it is in your possession you may have to pay for all or part of its repair or replacement.

IV-F. PROGRAM PROMOTION

You took the training, wrote the script, shot the tape, and finished your first television program. Congratulations! Now, is it time to gather family and friends, turn on the television set, and watch the world premiere of your creation? Well, not quite yet. You still have to sell your show to an audience.

People need to know what your show is, when it will be on, and basically why they should watch. Promoting your program is part of the total production process, and you can be creative in getting the word out effectively.

About two weeks before your program is first telecast a concise, double-spaced typewritten press release should be sent to all major media in your area. And send copies to smaller organizations like churches and synogogues, clubs, and neighborhood associations, particularly those connected with your target audience (e.g., older persons, fishermen, art groups). Follow up your mailings with a phone call. An attractive poster or leaflet might be developed and tacked on bulletin boards from libraries to Laundromats. Some cable TV companies offer space in their monthly program guides for promoting local shows. Use it.

On the electronic side, radio stations will often announce nonprofit shows, and the

local broadcast TV stations (who rarely view community TV as competitors) might even be enticed to do a feature news report on your TV team. And certainly don't overlook the access channels themselves. Be sure to get space on the electronic bulletin board and take the time to develop a short (30 seconds to one minute) promotional video spot for your show which can play on or between other access shows. A few clips from your program, edited together with a "voice-over," is a simple way to do this.

As your fame swells, bring on the bumper stickers and T-shirts, but remember: ultimately, your program's appeal hinges on the value of the show itself, not the promotional effort. And if you're really serious about big success in community TV, you will start thinking in terms of a simple series, telecast in a regular prime time slot, efficiently produced, and elegant in its content.

If your program is not too localized, it may be of interest to viewers in neighboring cable systems or even other parts of the country. A number of access channels have tape-exchange arrangements with other TV facilities, so consider this as a way of bicycling your tape throughout a larger distribution area than your hometown.

To learn more about community TV possibilities contact NFLCP. NFLCP offers a variety of resources including publications, assistance locating other active access centers, and regular regional and national conferences concerned with community television. The Institute of Lifetime Learning, an educational service of AARP's Program Department also offers a variety of resources that can assist in designing important and interesting programs related to older persons. For more information, contact the Institute of Lifetime Learning, 1909 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20049.

Promoting your own program is tied inextricably to the whole concept of community TV itself. Use your influence, charm and new knowledge to cultivate key local leaders' support of this new means of democratic expression.

Actively seek the energetic involvement of others in your programming efforts and remember to send thank-you notes to everyone who contributed to the production process, including appreciative audience members. Keep good general records and start a scrap book with photos, press clippings, and other memorabilia your production team generates in its ventures. Be serious about getting things accomplished, but don't forget to keep your team spirit high.

Welcome to community television!

Section V

GLOSSARY

AC ADAPTOR	a device that converts common electrical power (alternating current) into direct current (DC), the kind that powers portable video equipment.
APERTURE	the adjustable opening of a camera lens through which light passes.
ASPECT RATIO	the proportion of the picture height to picture width. A television screen has a 3:4 aspect ratio.
ASSEMBLY EDIT	a type of edit that lays down a new video, and audio tracks on a tape along with a new control track.
BACKGROUND LIGHT	illuminates the background behind performers. Sometimes called a set light.
BACK LIGHT	illumination from behind and above talent that lends a sense of depth to the picture.
BARN DOORS	hinged flaps on television lights that permit control of beam.
BICYCLE	to exchange tape programs with other television facilities (through the mail or other means).
BOOM	a pole-like extension upon which a microphone is mounted.
BROADCAST	to transmit over the airwaves.
BURN-IN	damage to the camera pickup tube usually caused by pointing the camera at excessive bright light.
BUS	a row of buttons of video sources on a switcher panel.
CABLECAST	to send out programming over a cable TV system.

CHARACTER GENERATOR	a typewriter-like device used to put alpha-numeric information on a television screen.
CLOSE-UP	a camera shot in which the principal subject appears large and prominent in the picture.
COLOR BARS	a standard video test signal made up of six to eight vertical colored stripes.
CONTROL ROOM	a room, usually adjacent to a studio, containing audio and video recording and switching equipment, and staffed by the director and other crew members during a production.
CONTROL TRACK	a narrow band at the top of a video tape used to synchronize videotape editing and playback operations.
COVER SHOT	tape footage of long-shots, reaction shots, and other general scenes; used primarily to cover up an unsightly edit.
CUE	to signal a performer.
CUE CARD	written information held up by the floor director advising talent of pertinent data, such as remaining time.
CUT	an instantaneous change from one shot to another.
CUT-AWAY	another term for cover shot.
CUEING LEADER	tape footage preceding actual program comprised usually of color bars, black, and a countdown.
DIRECTOR	the supervisor of a production crew.
DOLLY	to move the camera in or out from a subject; a wheeled device upon which a tripod is often mounted.
DUB	to copy a video tape from one VCR to another.
EDITING	the process of selecting portions of a production and fitting them together into a program.
EDIT SCRIPT	final script of a television program.
EFFECTS	special effects such as fading, wiping, and keying video sources.
ENG/EFP	Electronic News Gathering/Electronic Field Production: terms used to refer to remote or out-of-studio productions.
ESTABLISHING SHOT	an opening shot, usually wide in perspective, setting the general elements of a scene.
FADE	to blend one video source into another.

FADER BARS	lever on a video switcher used to create certain special effects.
FILL LIGHT	a general light used on a set to soften shadows cast by key light.
FIELD	term used for video productions taking place outside the studio.
FILM CHAIN	device used to transfer various film sources to videotape.
FOCUS	the act of getting a sharp image by locating the point where light rays converge to produce a clear, sharp image.
FORMAT	This word has two distinct meanings: (1) the shape of a particular videotape and the electronic characteristics it possesses (e.g., VHS, BETA), and three-fourths inch (2) type of program such as news, talk, or magazine.
FRANCHISE	a legal agreement between a government entity and a cable company granting rights to provide cable TV service to an area.
GRAPHICS	visual information prepared for a television production.
GEN LOCK	a device that permits two or more video sources to receive the same synchronized signal, enabling special effects among the sources.
GLITCH	a momentary break up of the video picture.
HEADROOM	the distance from the top of a person's head to the top of the video screen.
HUE	the various shades of a color.
INTERCOM	a device used for communications between the studio and control room.
INSERT	a type of edit that may change the video or audio channels but does not affect the control track of a videotape.
JUMP CUT	a video edit that makes a subject appear to snap instantaneously into a new position.
KEY	a special effect that permits the bright or dark areas of one video source to be superimposed over another video source.
KEY LIGHT	the main illumination on a subject on a television set.
LAVALIER	a type of microphone that attaches to clothing or is worn around the neck of on-camera talent.
LOCAL ORIGINATION	a type of community TV channel that offers programming produced by a cable company's professional staff and which also usually carries some commercial advertising.

LOG	to make a written record of videotape footage.
LONG SHOT	a camera shot where the main subject appears small among its surroundings.
MATTE	a special effect similar to keying which permits colorizing of parts of one video source superimposed over another.
MONITOR	a high-definition television set which can receive signals from a video source such as a VCR, but which usually does not contain a tuner to pick up broadcast signals.
NARROWCAST	to telecast to a very specific geographic audience.
NOSE ROOM	the space in front of a person looking towards the edge of the television screen.
OVER-THE-SHOULDER SHOT	camera shot looking over shoulder of person in foreground at another person in background.
ON LOCATION	a term similar to "in the field" referring to video productions taking place outside the studio.
PAN	horizontal movement of the camera.
PEDESTAL	a support upon which the camera is mounted and which can move up and down.
PEG CHANNELS	Public, Educational, and Governmental cable access channels.
PENETRATION	the percentage of potential households actually subscribing to a cable TV system.
PORTAPAK	the basic video equipment used in field productions capable of operating on battery power.
POST PRODUCTION	events such as editing taking place after video footage is recorded.
POT	short for potentionmeter, a sound-volume control.
PRE-PRODUCTION	planning events, such as scriptwriting, which take place before actual video recording commences.
PRE-ROLL	back space then forward roll of videotape before edit point to ensure a clean edit.
PRODUCER	the person ultimately responsible for overseeing all aspects of the production.
PROPS	furniture and other objects appearing on a set.
REMOTE	another term for production taking place outside the studio.

RF	technically means "radio frequency" but also is a type of signal which can carry both audio and video information.
ROLL	to set a videotape to playing or recording forward.
RUSH	the raw footage video tape shot to be later considered for editing.
SCRIPT	written copy of video and audio information that makes up a production.
SEG	Special Effects Generator, ususally incorporated in switcher.
SET	the environment in which the production takes place.
SET LIGHT	a background light illuminating the set behind performers.
SCRIM	a metal screen placed in front of a light to soften and diffuse lighting effect.
SEGUE	(pronounced SEG-way) the blending of the end of one sound source into the beginning of a second sound source.
SHOOT	a television production.
SHOT SHEET	a listing of various camera shoots with comments noted for each camera operator.
STAND-BY	a warning cue given in television production.
STRIKE	to remove and store set props and equipment.
STORYBOARD	a written description of a script where video information is sketched on a paper screen.
SUPER	to superimpose words, pictures, or other graphics as in a key effect.
SWITCHER	a panel containing buttons for several video inputs and devices for producing effects among the sources (e.g., fading from one camera to another).
SYNC	electronic synchronization necessary for coordination of several video sources.
TAKE	to cut instantly from one video source to another; a recording of a scene.
TALENT	person(s) appearing "on camera."
TALLY LIGHT	red light on cameras and in viewfinders indicating when camera image is being recorded or transmitted.

TBC	Time Base Corrector: a device which adjusts for some videotape errors and permits certain special effects and video signal adjustment.
TD	Technical Director, crew member who operates switcher.
TILT	movement of the camera swinging up and down on the camera's mounting.
TITLE	any graphic material shown on-camera.
TREATMENT	a preliminary form of a script.
TRIPOD	a three-legged support for camera often mounted on a dolly in studio setting.
TRUCK	horizontal or lateral movement of a camera and its support.
VIDEO	picture portion of a telecast.
VTR/VCR	VideoTape Recorder, VideoCassette Recorder.
VIEWFINDER	a small television monitor built into a camera allowing operator to see what the camera sees.
VOLUME	the relative intensity of sound.
VU METER	a Volume Unit meter, measures loudness of amplified sound.
WINDSCREEN	foam covering for microphone that diminishes interfering sound caused by wind.
WIPE	special effect that combines two video sources into a geometric pattern.
WRAP-AROUND	introductory and following segments to the main program.
ZOOM	a camera movement that allows a change from a wide shot to a close up by adjusting the lens of the camera.

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AARP

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) is the nation's largest organization of older Americans with a membership exceeding 23 million. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, AARP serves it members through legislative representation, educational and community service programs, and direct membership benefits.

Institute of Lifetime Learning

The Institute of Lifetime Learning is one of the educational services of AARP's Progam Department. The Institute serves as a resource center and national clearinghouse on continuing education for older persons. It publishes educational resource materials for older persons and offers free study materials in print, audio, and video formats for individual or group use. It conducts surveys, initiates workshops, and provides technical help to organizations and institutions interested in developing educational programs for older learners. For more information contact:

Institute of Lifetime Learning
AARP
Program Department
1909 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20049

NFLCP

The National Federation of Local Cable Programmers (NFLCP) is a nonprofit, membership organization founded in 1976 to foster citizen participation in commuity television.

Through publications, training programs and conferences, the NFLCP seeks to discover and assist users of local cable channels, facilitate the exchange of information about community cable issues, share innovative programming ideas among community access centers and ensure continued public access to the television medium. For more information contact:

NFLCP
906 Pennsylvania Avenue S.E.
Washington, DC 20003

AARP
American Association of
Retired Persons
1909 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20049

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